



Kansas Day 2004

Kansas Day 2004 marks the beginning of the Kansas Territorial Sesquicentennial or the 150th Anniversary of Kansas' seven-year struggle to become a state. To commemorate the day, hundreds of Kansas students, teachers, parents and friends joined me here at the Statehouse to learn more about this tumultuous time in our history. We took time to honor those who came before us and celebrate our rich heritage.

As you may recall, this period in our state's history wasn't without difficulty. The familiar term "Bleeding Kansas" was coined during this time, and marked the fight for freedom in this state. There was deep conflict regarding the politics of slavery in Kansas. Many people believed in freedom for all Kansans. Those "freestaters" fought with pro-slavery forces on a number of fronts. Practically every issue divided the two philosophies, and too many times violence erupted.

The implication concerning whether or not Kansas should become a slave state was a far-reaching one, erupting into a national political issue. It wasn't until January 29, 1861, that Kansas was made the 34th state.

But, even through these difficult times, early settlers knew the value of education. The State Library was founded in 1854, making this year their 150th Anniversary as well. Kansans from the very beginning realized that Libraries bring the educational experience alive and enrich the lives of all in our communities. Early schools played an important role in the continued growth of communities across Kansas.

Our state motto is "Ad Astra Per Aspera," Latin for "To the Stars Through Difficulty." It reflects the adversity of this great State's history and the promise of its present and future. Even in these difficult times today, I will continue to keep our schools strong and ensure a bright future for all Kansans.

***If you'd like to learn more about the fascinating stories of the Kansas territory, visit www.territorialkansasonline.org.*